

A GOAL down at half-time, Wycombe Wanderers hit back with an excellent second half performance to deservedly take three points from Saturday's visit to Hitchin in the Isthmian League Premier Division.

In ending Hitchin's six match unbeaten home record, Wanderers extended their own run without defeat to six games. The Blues are still placed third behind Tooting and Enfield, both winners on Saturday, but

By STUART EARP Hitchin Town 1, Wycombe Wanderers 3

this victory will have caused a few raised eyebrows in the Premier Division.

A 3-1 away win always looks impressive, especially against the fourth placed club in the table. It must be said, however, that it was only a late goal that gave the scoreline a convincing look, although Wycombe thoroughly deserved their success.

On the mark again was Derek Harris who bagged two goals to make it three in as many games. Wanderers have lacked a man to do the basic job of snapping up chances this season but

Derek seems to fit the bill perfectly. It won't surprise me if he finishes with over 20 goals this season. Tony Horseman got the other, by the way, from the penalty spot.

The story of this game can be separated into two distinctly different halves and was a clear case of one side adapting to the conditions on the day. Like most other games throughout the country, this match was played in a howling wind that made good football difficult to say the least. A hard, bumpy pitch didn't help either.

Blues boss John Reardon

was forced to change his back four when Bob Davies had to withdraw with a pulled muscle. As Steve Vass is also out injured, midfielder Farouk Quraishi switched to left back, Tony Horseman returned to the forward line and Mick Holifield dropped back into midfield.

It may have been these changes, or the strong crossfield wind, that upset Wanderers for the least said about their first half performance the better. Mistakes were rife as the ball bounced awkwardly and there were only a couple of chances created by either side.

Hitchin were the better of two poor sides and they deserved their 36th minute goal by youngster Terry Scott. It came from a corner which hung tantalisingly in the wind. Wycombe failed to clear, Grafton got a touch and Scott was there to nod home past Peter Spittle. It was a scrappy goal to give away but full credit to Scott, who was playing for Chalfont St. Peter last year, for taking his chance well. Incidentally, the flag kick came from another former Bucks youngster, Kevin Mulhern, who used to play for Amersham Town.

Whatever John Reardon said to his players at half-time certainly did the trick for Wycombe looked a changed side after the break. Working harder, they carved out a series of chances with some excellent football in the conditions.

After Dylan Evans had failed to control a possible chance in the first minute, the Blues equalised 60 seconds later when Dave Archibald was adjudged to have handled inside his area. Horseman's penalty was half stopped by keeper Bradwell and although it rolled over the line, referee Drew decided the keeper had moved and ordered the penalty to be re-taken. Horseman hit the ball straight but it was enough to beat Bradwell again.

Encouraged by their success, Wanderers had their best spell of the match. They always threatened when attacking from the right flank where any crosses were caught by the wind and caused havoc in the Hitchin defence. Horseman had Bradwell at full stretch to take a 55th minute header and Wanderers went ahead for the first time on the hour.

CRASHED HOME

Ray Brimson lost possession inside his own penalty area and Horseman raced on to drive a shot at Bradwell from a narrow angle. The 'keeper failed to hold the ball and Harris pounced to crash home a shot from close range.

After Horseman had wasted a chance to sew the game up at 3-1, Hitchin began a 15 minute assault on the visitors defence which stood up well to the pressure. Keith Mead and Alan Phillips were outstanding at the heart of the back four.

There was more than one occasion, however, when Wycombe hearts were fluttering. Phillips almost headed into his own net and then in the 82nd minute Birdseye's concentration lapsed when playing the ball back to Spittle. A nasty bounce let in Scott but Spittle saved the day by sticking out a boot to deflect the ball away.

Birdseye quickly made amends by firing in a drive at the other end which Bradwell turned round a post and then Mackenzie snatched at a chance at the far post. But Wanderers made sure of the points in the 89th minute with a classic breakaway goal.

Holifield raced over the halfway line after Mackenzie had won the ball. Holifield put Evans clear down the left wing and his perfect far post cross gave Harris time to select his spot and head home.

HITCHIN: R. Bradwell; S. Norris, R. Brimson, D. Archibald, M. Grafton; J. Whishaw, K. Mulhern, S. Baker (sub M. Ward 69 mins); P. Watson, T. Scott, P. Giggie.

WYCOMBE: P. Spittle; P. Birdseye, K. Mead, A. Phillips, F. Quraishi, G. Mackenzie, R. Day, M. Holifield; A. Horseman (sub J. Priestley 83 mins), D. Harris, D. Evans.

Half-time: 1-0. **Goalscorers:** Hitchin — Scott (36). Wycombe — Horseman (47), Harris 2 (60, 89). **Referee:** P. Drew (Uppminster). **Attendance:** 600.

BOB DAVIES, Wycombe Wanderers' left back who missed Saturday's win at Hitchin, is likely to be out of action again tonight (Tuesday) when the Blues meet Hayes at Loakes Park in the Isthmian League Premier Division.

Davies has a pulled muscle and manager John Reardon does not wish to risk further aggravation to the injury. This means that Farouk Quraishi will stay at left back.

Another player who will be absent is Mick Holifield currently on holiday for a fortnight. John Priestley or Howard Kennedy will take his place in midfield if Quraishi stays at full back.

Steve Pratt, who scored at Staines recently but unable to command a regular place this season, has asked the club for permission to play for Thame United in the Hellenic League. It seems likely that the club will agree but retain first choice on the player.

Unbeaten in six games with five victories under their belts,

Wanderers will be hoping to avenge a 1-0 defeat at Hayes in August. Hayes will have Bobby Wiles back in the side in midfield while a recent addition is Neil Bunker from Boreham Wood. Also in the Hayes side is Dave

Bullock, who spent several seasons at Loakes Park before moving last season.

ISTHMIAN LEAGUE PREMIER DIVISION (up to and inc. 3/10/77)

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Enfield	12	9	2	1	24	9	29
Tooting	12	9	0	3	18	9	27
Wycombe	13	8	2	3	23	13	26
Hitchin	12	7	2	3	16	13	23
Staines	12	6	4	2	17	13	22
Leatherhead	11	6	3	2	20	9	21
Dagenham	14	6	3	5	24	23	21
Sutton	11	6	2	3	14	9	20
Barking	11	6	1	4	19	14	19
Gershelton	10	5	3	2	18	10	18
Hendon	13	4	4	5	19	18	18
Boreham W	11	5	1	5	16	19	18
Walthamstow	10	4	3	3	13	14	15
Croydon	12	4	2	6	13	15	14
Hayes	10	3	3	4	7	8	13
Kingsnorthian	12	2	4	6	13	18	10
Southall	12	2	4	6	12	17	10
Tilbury	11	2	4	5	14	20	10
Woking	11	2	1	8	10	20	7
Leistonstone	10	1	3	6	10	19	6
Slough	9	1	2	6	10	19	5
Stortford	13	0	2	11	13	36	2

SATURDAY'S FIXTURES

K. O. 3 p.m.

Isthmian League Premier

Division: Wycombe Wanderers v Bishop's Stortford.

Kingsmead Athenian League:

Chalfont St. Peter v Redhill, Ruislip Manor v Burnham, Marlow v Uxbridge.

London Spartan League Senior

Division: Boreham Wood v Amersham Town.